



THE NEW SUNDAY EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SUNDAY • FEBRUARY 16, 2025 • ₹12.00 • PAGES 26 • LATE CITY EDITION



Q I have always accepted that I am responsible for my team and realise WADA's strict rules are an important protection for the sport I love

—Jannik Sinner

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SINNER, WADA REACH AGREEMENT: WORLD NO. 1 GETS 3-MONTH BAN

Winner of three Majors, the Italian, who twice tested positive for banned substance, will be suspended effective immediately.

WORLD BODY WITHDRAWS CAS CASE

The Italian, who twice tested positive for clostebol last year, had been exonerated by an independent panel in August. But the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), unhappy with the verdict, had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). WADA has now withdrawn that case after reaching an agreement in line with Anti-Doping Code.

SINNER DID NOT INTEND TO CHEAT: WADA

- In a statement, WADA held that the Italian, who won the Australian Open, 'did not intend to cheat, and that his exposure to clostebol did not provide any performance-enhancing benefit'.
- They, however, held that he's responsible for the actions of his entourage. Sinner had tested positive last March.

Feb 9-May 4

SINNER'S BAN PERIOD, THE FRENCH OPEN BEGINS MAY 25



Passengers try to get into a train at an overcrowded platform 15 of New Delhi railway station on Saturday | PH

Stampede horror at New Delhi railway station leaves 15 dead

SHEKHAR SINGH & RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

AT least 15 people, including three children, died and several injured after a massive crowd surge on platform numbers 14 and 15 at New Delhi Railway Station led to a stampede on Saturday. The incident occurred as thousands of passengers gathered to board trains heading to Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh.

The Chief Casualty Medical Officer of the LNJP hospital

confirmed the deaths. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena said lives were lost in the incident.

The Northern Railways, meanwhile, denied any stampede-like situation.

According to a senior official from the Delhi Fire Service, they received a call around 9.55 pm regarding a stampede situation at platforms 14 and 15. Four fire tenders were rushed.

Eyewitnesses said the stampede occurred when people on

the overbridge started running towards platforms 14 and 15 on seeing trains to Prayagraj arriving.

Some of them complained that they missed the trains because they were not allowed to board the trains.

Northern Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer Himanshu Upadhyay told a news agency that passengers pushed each other leading to the commotion.

Saxena said an inquiry has been ordered.

EXPRESS READ

Will fight for better share of water: Gowda



Bengaluru: Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda said Karnataka should receive 25 tmcft of water under the Godavari-Krishna-Cauvery irrigation project and pledged to fight for this alongside all political parties. He said he will soon write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking him to direct the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) to set right this injustice | P4

VAISHNAW REVEALS PLAN TO LAY B'LURU-KIA RAIL LINE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

MINISTER for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday announced his ministry's plan to implement a railway project connecting Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) with Bengaluru city.

As per the plan, a dedicated 7.9-km rail line will be laid between Doddajala and KIA. A 6.25-km stretch of the line will be elevated and 1.65 km underground.

"Apart from the road, metro and suburban rail links, we are creating another railway network to KIA," Vaishnaw told reporters. He said during his last visit, he travelled by train from KIA to the city. "It was a comfort-

able 40 to 45-minute ride. However, the proposed project faced technical issues. It needs a railway flyover. A team of experts presented a report today. I will share it with you soon. This will bring significant relief to people," Vaishnaw said.

Emphasising the need for suburban and metro rail projects for Bengaluru, he said the Union and state governments should work in tandem to implement them at the earliest.

Vaishnaw expressed disappointment over execution of suburban railway project work by Karnataka-Rail Infrastructure Development Company (K-RIDE). It lacks technical expertise, he said and appealed to the state to appoint a full-time MD and 13 technically qualified personnel to K-RIDE. P4

Punjab chief minister objects to Amritsar being chosen arrival point

US sends back 116 Indians in military aircraft

JAYANTH JACOB & HARPREET BAJWA @ New Delhi / Chandigarh

A US military plane carrying 116 Indian deportees landed at Amritsar airport on Saturday night, officials said. Earlier, there were reports that the plane would carry 119 immigrants. According to sources, 65 deportees are from Punjab and 33 from Haryana. The rest are from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

This is the second such deportation since Donald Trump took office as President—triggering a fresh political controversy with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann protesting the choice of Amritsar as the arrival point.

While Mann alleged the BJP-led government at the Centre deliberately chose Amritsar as the landing site to 'defame Punjab', sources told this newspaper that the arrival airport is decided after taking in view the deportees' convenience for returning home. The sources pointed out that many of those deported are from the border areas of Punjab.

Amritsar has been a primary arrival point for deportees for some time, including in October last year when a group of illegal immigrants were sent back from the US through a chartered flight.

However, the Trump administration's use of a military plane to deport immigrants has sparked protests in India, with concerns raised over deportees arriving in handcuffs. India is



'Why not land in Delhi'

Accusing the Centre of trying to defame his state, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann asked why it's always Punjab and not Delhi to land the deportation plane. A third plane carrying 157 deportees is also expected on Sunday

understood to have raised the issue of inhuman treatment of its citizens with the US, but the US has once again chosen to send them back on a military aircraft.

Earlier this month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Parliament that restraints are part of the Standard Operating Procedures of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement while deporting illegals. However, legal experts say the use of shackles hurt the deportees' dignity and violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1976 and the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984.

It was not immediately clear whether the deportees were in shackles or not.

Punjab police make first arrest, nab travel agent

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

PUNJAB police made its first arrest of a travel agent involved in illegal immigration practices, following the deportation of 104 Indians from the US on February 5. Anil Batra, one of four accused, was arrested for sending a US deportee to the US via the 'Dunki route'.

Talking to this newspaper, inspector Abhey Singh Chauhan said that based on a complaint of Gurwinder Singh of Bhadson, Patiala, a case was registered on February 8 against travel agent Anil Batra and three others who had sent Singh to US via the 'Dunki route'.

Batra allegedly took ₹45 lakh from Singh to facilitate his travel to the US. Singh was first sent to Dubai, then to Suriname, and eventually made his way to the US via Central America, with the help of traffickers and smugglers.

The arrest comes after a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was formed to probe complaints of fraudulent travel agents involved in deceptive immigration practices. The SIT has registered 10 FIRs against travel agents who allegedly deceived victims with false promises of facilitating illegal entry into the US.

Police have frozen Batra's bank account, which had a balance of ₹6.35 lakh. Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav has urged the general public to come forward with any information that could assist in apprehending travel agents who facilitate illegal entry into the US, and advised citizens to only approach registered agents for immigration services.



Social media posts help cops nab man on the run for 9 years

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

SOCIAL media posts and ordering food online helped police nab a 35-year-old rowdy-shooter in the city on Thursday. Mohammed Farooq, who had seven cases, including an attempt to murder, against him, evaded arrest for nine years. A rowdy-shooter in Madivala police limits, Farooq took to crime in 2012 and continued till 2016 when he went underground.

Farooq's family members, including his brother-in-law, who is with Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP), were questioned. But nobody had any information about him. His wife is rowdy-shooter Jaani's sister. Even Jaani revealed nothing about Farooq when police questioned him.

When efforts of police did not yield any result, a crucial lead came from an informant, who saw a picture of Farooq in front of Vidhana Soudha on Instagram.

During investigation, it was found that Farooq operated an Instagram account in his son's name. Police took the IP address and that helped them find Farooq's mobile phone number. Based on the tower dump, police learnt that he lived in Doddakallasandra on Kanakapura Road. As it did not help them find his exact location, they approached online food aggregators to find out if there were bookings from that mobile phone number. This revealed Farooq's residential address, a police officer said.

Farooq was arrested when he was returning home after picking his child from school.

Farooq lived with his wife and child in an upscale apartment. He stopped all criminal activities in 2016 and became a car dealer. He did not attend his father's funeral fearing arrest, the police officer said.



LEFT IN THE LURCH

Customers of the New India Cooperative Bank gather outside a branch in Mumbai on Saturday after the RBI imposed restrictions on issuing loans and withdrawals due to liquidity concerns and governance issues | PH

BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

Tharoor's praise for Kerala in TNIE column sparks Cong backlash

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ TPuram/Malappuram/Kozhikode

FINDING itself in an embarrassing situation after party MP Shashi Tharoor heaped praise on the Left-ruled Kerala, calling the state a model of economic innovation and sustainable growth, the Congress leadership launched an open attack on him.

While several Congress lead-

ers, including V D Satheesan, K C Venugopal, and Ramesh Chennithala, dismissed Tharoor's arguments in his column in The New Indian Express that appeared on February 14, he understandably, found support among the Left leadership.

Even as his views sparked uproar, Tharoor stuck to his

ground, saying the article was in Kerala's interest. In his column, Tharoor said Kerala has emerged as a dynamic centre for startups. He termed Industries Minister P Rajeev's claim that a business can be opened in just two minutes as an "astonishing



When somebody in the government does something well, one should acknowledge and praise it. I've criticised and praised in fairness and on the basis of specific points—Shashi Tharoor

development". Soon after the article appeared, Rajeev shared it on social media, thanking Tharoor. Brushing aside Tharoor's comments, Leader of Opposition Satheesan said the party will examine the circumstances under which such claims were made.

Senior Congress leader K Muralidharan asked the party national leadership to respond to Tharoor's comments.

AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said Tharoor's views did not conform to reality. "Kerala's industries sector is in a bad state. Is there any development happening in the coir and fisheries sectors?" he asked.

Ramesh Chennithala said

Tharoor had a misunderstanding. "Kerala is not an investment-friendly state. Several enterprises were shut during the LDF's tenure," he said. It's learnt that the party leadership may seek disciplinary action against Tharoor.

Without mentioning Tharoor, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "His statements were based on facts and numbers."

